

## FOOD LABELING AND CONTENT CLAIMS

Food dollars are the most important dollars seniors spend. They can be spent wisely buying nourishing meals for the family.

You may be eating good foods each day, but still are not as healthy as you could be because of the **amount** of food you eat. The amount and kinds of food you eat can be as important to your good health as what you eat.

The serving size remains the basis for reporting each food's nutrient content. Nutritional regulations also spell out what terms may be used to describe the level of a nutrient in a food and how they can be used. These are the core terms seniors can look for:

**Free:** This term in food labeling means that a product contains no amount of fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, sugars, and calories.

**Low:** This means that these foods can be eaten frequently without exceeding dietary guidelines for one or more components of fats, cholesterol, sodium, and calories.

**Lean and extra lean:** These terms can be used to describe the fat content of meat, poultry, seafood and game meats. A **lean meat** has less than 10 g fat, 4.5 g or less saturated fat, and less than 95 mg cholesterol per serving. **Extra lean meats** should have less than 5 g fat, less than 2 g saturated fat, and less than 95 mg cholesterol per serving.

**High:** This term can be used if the food contains 20 percent or more of the Daily Value for a particular nutrient in a serving.

**Good source:** This term means that one serving of a food contains 10 to 19 percent of the Daily Value for a particular nutrient.

**Reduced:** This term means that a nutritionally altered product contains at least 25 percent less of a nutrient or of calories than the regular product.

**Less:** This term means that a food, whether altered or not, contains 25 percent less of a nutrient or of calories than the reference food.

**Light:** This descriptor can mean two things: That a nutritionally altered product contains one-third fewer calories or half the fat of the referenced food. Secondly, that the sodium content of a low-calorie, low-fat food has been reduced by 50 percent.

**More:** This term means that a serving of food, whether altered or not, contains a nutrient that is at least 10 percent of the Daily Value more than the referenced food.

**Healthy:** A “healthy” food must be low in fat and saturated fat and contain limited amounts of cholesterol and sodium. In addition, if it’s a single-item food, it must provide at least 10 percent of one or more of vitamins A or C, iron, calcium, protein, or fiber.

**Fresh:** This term is used to suggest that a food is raw or unprocessed. In this context, “fresh” can be used only on a food that is raw, has never been frozen or heated, and contains no preservatives.

These mandatory and voluntary components are the only ones allowed on the Nutrition Facts panel. All nutrients must be declared as percentages of the Daily Values which are label reference values. The % Daily Value listing carries a footnote saying that the percentages are based on a 2,000-calorie and a 2,500-calorie diet.